

Limiting God's gift of life

Population control is a critical factor in environmental degradation, asserts William K. Reilly, who contends that the U.S. Catholic bishops should reiterate the church's belief in ethical requirements of parenthood.

Reilly, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, challenged the bishops conference earlier this year to issue a statement about safeguar-

ding of the environment.

"There's certainly no inconsistency between being pro-life and pro-environment," Reilly said.

Perhaps not, but can Catholics be pro-life and also support population control?

Left unchecked, our numbers could nearly triple from an estimated 5.3 billion today to 14.2 billion by the 22nd century, according to a report released last month by a Washington-based group-called the Population Crisis Committee.

To prevent such a scenario — which would worsen poverty, starvation and environmental damage, and increase the likelihood of war, the report contends — world spending on birth control should increase from the current \$3.2 billion to \$10.5 billion per year by the year 2000. Then, the report claims, world population could stabilize at 9.3 billion.

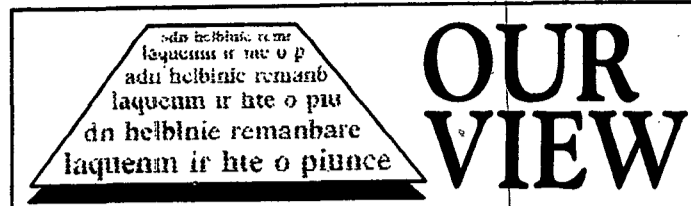
The report marks the beginning of a "new anti-child campaign" to spread artificial birth control among the poor and those in developing nations, responds Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, N.J., a member of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Pro-life Activities.

Bishop McHugh contends that the world "is not running out of food, natural resources or the capacity for economic change and development."

Bishop McHugh's argument rests with the maxim on which many a large Catholic family has been raised: The God who grants us life will provide.

Somewhere between the two poles of opinion lies the concept of a "responsible transmission of life."

That quoted phrase came from Pope John Paul II. Speaking to a congregation in the African nation of Cameroon five years ago, the pope affirmed the fundamental Catholic principle that "human life, even if weak and suffering, is always a splendid gift of God's



goodness," but also recognized "the grave problems posed by population growth in some parts of the world or the difficult situations sometimes facing couples in the responsible transmission of life."

How that last phrase is interpreted depends upon the listener. Among the world's poorest people, whose numbers are also growing fastest, children are variously a workforce to ensure survival; a safeguard against high infant mortality; and the products of a lifegiving act which is among the few pleasures life offers to millions living in grinding poverty.

The consumer culture of the United States and some other developed nations, on the other hand, brands as "irresponsible" all conceptions unsupported by a preschool-through-college tuition fund and the most complete assortment of nursery equipment known to humankind.

Yet such economic "bumper pads" have failed to insulate our children from violence, abuse or drug addiction. Nor has the availability of artificial birth control stemmed pregnancies among our teens, although abortion has provided a tragic means of reducing the number who give birth.

The church points to education and natural family planning as the moral means with which to control population — an avenue many environmentalists dismiss as impractical throughout much of the world.

But we clearly have no right to export artificial birth control to developing nations as if it were, in the pope's words, "the compulsory path to development and progress."

— The Editors



When imperialism wins, freedom and democracy lose

To the editor:

Catholicism is based on the moral teachings of Jesus that give precedence to the needs and suffering of poor people. As such, Catholics in the United States must begin to comprehend the evil policies of the U.S. government toward our neighbors in Central America. This requires sorting through the slick public relations generated in Washington and distributed by the corporate media.

Since the brutal invasion of Panama and the U.S.-distorted election in Nicaragua, the U.S. propaganda machine has been full of self-congratulation hailing these "victories for freedom and democracy." Freedom and democracy are both sacred ideas that deserve better treatment than Washington's sacreligious mockery.

In "The Real World of Democracy," C.B. McPherson explains that democracy has traditionally been a leveling doctrine that means "rule by the common people,

the plebians ... the sway of the lowest and largest class." Capitalist America has never been a democracy; it is a plutocracy, ruled by our wealthiest and bloodiest class.

Freedom implies those inherent, individual rights to pursue life, liberty and happiness within the bounds of responsibility and honesty. When U.S. imperialists pontificate about "freedom," it means that capitalist investors must have the unfettered ability to exploit workers and steal natural resources in order to enrich themselves.

Uncle Sam has been invading and intervening in poor countries for nearly 150 years and has never established a democracy anywhere in the Third World. The formula is easy: The United States sets up puppet governments that thwart "rule by the common people" in support of capitalist interests and calls these hellholes "democracies."

Throughout history, the United States

with more obscene words in front of us and our young children than I thought possible and carried a cross with a naked woman on it. We have been called christo-facists, "anti-choice bigots," women haters and some names that could not be printed in a legitimate paper. I stood outside and listened as the pro-choice-to-kill bunch rabidly planned their strategy to get "Mugavero" and maligned him repeatedly with great bitterness and hatred after one of their St. Theodore's picketing extravaganzas. Is this an attitude conducive to a legitimate dialogue? Where was compassion, understanding and openness to dialogue from the pro-choice-to-kill Catholics that manned picket signs in front of St. Theodore's that day?

Considering the way things are being handled by the Diocese in this matter, it's no wonder that "dialogue" has become the doublespeak for saving face ... for selling out for the sake of public image. Let's hope it ain't so.

Mary Ellen Frisch
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Spencerport

has used either gunboat diplomacy or stolen elections to enhance its imperialistic objectives. The United States blackmailed Nicaragua's voters by giving them the stark "choice" between a Sandinista victory or continued warfare. For months, the Bush administration made it clear to Nicaraguans that only an UNO triumph would result in a cessation of hostilities.

Three days before the February 25 election, Secretary of State James Baker said that a Sandinista victory, even if judged as fair by the hundreds of international observers, would not change U.S. policy

toward Nicaragua until "a substantial period of good behavior" had elapsed. Translation: If the Sandinistas win, the war goes on.

The majority of Nicaraguans have finally cried "uncle" after nine years of wanton U.S. contra terrorism, raping and murdering tens-of-thousands of civilians and "making the economy scream." Whenever U.S. imperialism wins democracy and freedom lose, and the aspirations of poor people everywhere are further crushed.

John E. Milich Ithaca

Critics shouldn't cast first stones

To the editor:

The letter of Joanne Rowan (CC: Feb. 1) is a scurrilous unfounded attack on the leadership of this Diocese.

A leader of a religious institution must be thoughtful, compassionate with an understanding of all of the people he serves. A pastor learns to grow in wisdom by realizing that there are many points of view in his parish. HE must help them all to come closer to God in prayer and service. A good leader must have all the facts presented as fully as possible and then make very difficult decisions.

Bishop Clark is a good, seasoned pastor. He knows that people on the far right think they have found the best way for them to find God in their lives and that people on the far left believe that they have. He must, in a loving way, be the leader of all so that the mighty torch of Faith is carried to the next generation.

Bishop Clark is an experienced leader who has sought the facts. He has had to make some very difficult decisions. No one at the top of an organizations lays off employees with glee but when there is not money in the bank to pay them, it is necessary. Bishop Clark should be applauded for being fiscally responsible, as well as caring.

Unfortunately, those at the top are not granted a mantle of elephant skin to withstand slings and arrows and snide comments. Let me say to those who have not had the awesome responsibility of standing

at the top, don't get out your little bag of stones and cast the first one.

Above all, the sharing of our earnings with the Thanks Giving Appeal is providing salaries to those who are working directly in the vineyard: youth ministers, those who serve the poor, chaplains, educators of Reflective Teams, secretaries. These are the people who are carrying on the most cherished beliefs of our Faith.

People who think that the most efficient arrow they can whiz at their leader, the Bishop, would be to stop giving to the Thanks Giving Appeal are short sighted and have not taken the time to know all of the facts. They shoot venom instead of light.

Margaret Joynt
Sandpiper Lane Pittsford

Letter selection praised

To the editor:

I wish to commend the editor of the *Catholic Courier* on the excellent choice of letters in the Opinion section. They are a balanced mix of many serious subjects with just a touch of humor.

The letter by the ordinarily affable Father Robert Collins (CC: March 1) faulting your selection of letters makes me think that he was just filling in as self-appointed temporary curmudgeon during the brief absence of Andy Rooney. For this we pray.

Father Raymond G. Heisel
Mother of Sorrows Church

Catholic Courier